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Treason and the Fate of Traitors.

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,

CHARLESTOWN, MASS.,

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 13, 1862.

BY GEORGE W. GARDNER,

PASTOR.

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CHARLESTOWN, APRIL 15, 1862.

Rev. GEO. W. GARDNER.

Dear Sir—

The undersigned, members of your Church and Society, having listened with peculiar pleasure to your discourse of Sabbath afternoon last, and desiring that it may have a more abiding place in our memories, and at the same time reach many who were not present on that occasion, hereby respectfully request, at your hands, a copy for publication; thus assuring you of our hearty appreciation of the sentiments therein contained.

Yours, with much esteem,

Signed,

GEO. C. GOODWIN,
GEO. W. LITTLE,
S. PRENTISS HILL,
WM. FOSDICK,
FRANCIS CHILDS,
J. WAKEFIELD ROBERTS,
GEO. D. EDMANDS,
JNO. F. DODGE,
CHAS. CALLENDER.

CHARLESTOWN, APRIL 16, 1862.

To Messrs. GOODWIN, LITTLE, HILL, and others.

Gentlemen—

Your note of the 15th inst. is before me. The sermon to which you refer was written with no expectation of further publicity than delivery from my own pulpit would give it. It is due to say, that it was prepared in great haste, and I have had no time to re-write it. Under these considerations it would better please me to allow it to rest where it is, but since you think otherwise, I yield my feelings and herewith send you the manuscript to use as you think best for the cause of "God and our native land."

With sentiments of highest esteem,

I am, Gentlemen,

Very truly,

Your obt. servt.,

GEO. W. GARDNER.

SERMON.

ISAIAH, xvii. 14.

"AND BEHOLD AT EVENING-TIDE TROUBLE; AND BEFORE THE MORNING HE IS NOT. THIS IS THE PORTION OF THEM THAT SPOIL US, AND THE LOT OF THEM THAT ROB US."

THOUGH spoken originally of the spoilers and robbers of the Jewish nation, the words of the text have a wider application and a deeper meaning than any single nation, or place, or occasion can claim.

Sennacherib, with the flower and strength of Assyria's armies, had come up and encamped against Jerusalem. Hezekiah, Israel's God-fearing king, having received the summons of the besieging enemy to surrender the city, "went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord;" closing his devout supplication with these words: "Now, therefore, oh Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only." Then Isaiah, the prophet of the Lord, spoke comforting words of assurance to the king, that God had heard his prayer, and would surely deliver the city. And the burden of his prophecy was this: "Woe to the multitude of many people which make a noise like the noise of the seas: and to the rushing of na-

tions, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!

The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

And behold at evening-tide trouble: and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us."

This was prophecy;—and the fulfilment of it is given in the remarkable words of the historian: "And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four score and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning behold they were all dead corpses." Thus Jerusalem lay down at night in a seige and awoke in the morning in a triumph; and *all this in direct answer to prayer.*

One year ago to-day the walls of Sumter were battered down. No one year before in the annals of profane history was ever so pregnant with great events and mighty interests as this has been. The alarum of war, when it came flying on the wings of the lightning, though not all unexpected, still found us as a nation wholly unprepared for the terrible emergency. The skies were black with awfully threatening clouds, and the hot winds of the south never spread a wider or more alarming tempest. All the southern sky of our national firmament was surcharged with black treason, and the red lightnings of conspiracy, blood, and conflagration threatened to sweep away our national capi-

tal, and drive Freedom, bleeding and scathed, back to the rocky fastnesses of the north, to weep and lament. Treason, open and barefaced, stalked in the streets of Washington. Nay, in the language of the great Roman orator, "came even into the Senate, and became partaker in the public counsels." So wide-spread had become the fearful disease of the republic, that it had reached every department of the government. It had fairly grown confident in its fancied success. It had blustered and threatened and robbed the country, and brow-beaten the President in the cabinet; it permeated all the departments from head to foot. It lurked and lied, and perjured itself, and stung the hand that fed it, in the army. It dishonored and disgraced in the eyes of the nations the bravest navy the world had ever seen. It sat in the chairs of states. It turned grave legislatures into mobs. It had demented half the people of half the states of our Union, and forced the other half into silence and submission. It robbed arsenals—it stole forts—it seized mails and public moneys—it repudiated honest debts. It persecuted to exile and death honest men who regarded their oath and their allegiance. It deposed loyal officers—it ordered treasonable conventions. Bastard as it was, it forced men to vote itself legitimate, at the point of the pistol and the bayonet. It defiled the bench of justice, and broke up courts. It crept with its slime into the very pulpits, and, subtle as its own father, beguiled the churches and offered mock prayers to God. Truly, those days, when thus this demon was loosed for a season from his chains, and as yet had received no blow, were dark days.

Then came the uprising of a free people; the determination of a united loyal North and West, to save the heritage of our fathers at any cost, and sweep insurrection back to its native gulf of darkness.

Then came the removal of suspected officers from places of power; the levying, or rather the receiving, of troops, the massing of forces about the threatened capital, the blockade, the manufacture of arms and ammunitions of war; then the reverses at Big Bethel, Manassas, and Ball's Bluff; then the anxious waiting and seeming inactivity;—which was really the disciplining and perfecting of the noblest army the world ever saw, for the successful carrying out of the masterly strategy of one of the world's greatest generals and noblest men:—then the apprehension of foreign war; then the turning of the tide. The successes at Henry and Donelson, and more recently the evacuation of the strong hold of Manassas; the utter discomfiture of rebellion in Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee; the victories at Pea Ridge, at Winchester—the bloodless triumph of the gallant, godly Foote, who prays as if God did all, and fights as if man did all,—and the terrible contest at Pittsburg, staining the field at once with blood and lighting it with glory:—truly, these, and the whole succession of events for the last three months, remind us of the Prophet's words: "At evening-tide there is trouble, and before the morning he is not." Yes the morning cometh and already he, our enemy, begins to disappear. The sun set upon the devoted batteries of Donelson, and there was trouble for him, and, behold, in the morning he was not! He was weltering in his blood, or stealing away from his post, to

illustrate more fully his character, and add a new word to the vocabulary of disgrace: or he was a rebel prisoner, about to exchange the "tug of war" for a quiet residence in the secure walls of Fort Warren.

Behold, another evening-tide came and found the splendid Union army of the Potomac moving in silent columns toward the unhappy field of our great disaster. Then, too, there was trouble with our foe, and lo, when the morning broke, "he was not"—there. Verily, "they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind." And what a day was that last sacred Sabbath, when from this very altar, and from so many others all over our dear land, the prayer of Hezekiah went up to the same God, "Oh Lord deliver us from the hands of our enemy. Give us bloodless victory if it may be, but give us victory at any price." And lo, on the morrow, God had given both, the bloodless and the bloody. Verily, "who is a God like unto our God."

Look upon the drenched fields and deserted strongholds of nearly every rebel state. Think upon the terrible distress and ruin the rebellion has brought upon its own head; the forsaken and desolated homes,—the prostration and ruin of commercial and mercantile interests; the dangers of pillage by devastating armies, that threaten every city and plantation of the south; the loss of even the prestige of chivalrous courage; the prospective horrors of other bloody fields; and the havoc that war, internal and servile even, may make of all their happiness. Look into our military prisons and see the flower of rebell-

ion idly smoking its own tobacco, and reading the news of Federal successes. Or, go look in the trenches of the rebel dead, for McCulloch and McIntosh, and Zollicoffer and Johnston, the pride and boast of rebeldom, and then say, if this is not and will not be the portion of those that spoil us, and the lot of all them that rob us.

The past year and the Great Rebellion have thrown great light upon much of the history of the Jews, and never could we have read the imprecations of David upon the enemies of Israel, with such appreciation and satisfaction as we now do, without just the experience we have had. One year ago yesterday, the "dogs of war" were loosed by the assaults of Beauregard upon a little band of brave patriots in Charleston harbor. To-day by proclamation of our true and noble chief magistrate, we celebrate a thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the success he has given us in the open field over this same petted conspirator.

It is a good time for us, in the midst of our thanksgiving, to consider *the fate of traitors;—the discomfiture and overthrow of rebellion in the light of recent events.* I do not purpose to discuss the question whether rebellion is ever just, and therefore will be successful. Doubtless there have been times in the world's history when to revolutionize was right;—to cut loose from old national bonds of oppression, would be favored of God. But that is a very different thing from conspiracy against the very existence and life of a great, free, and happy nation; such as that which has been plotted by the traitors of the South. In the light, then, of *this* conspiracy, we would view

the discomfiture of conspirators; and so viewing it we must conclude that their overthrow is righteous. If this be so, then God will have a hand in bringing it about.

1. *Treason is a sin against* MAN.

It violates human obligations; and whatever does this, commits an injustice, and wrongs all who are concerned in it. No man can wrong me more deeply, than he who enters with me into solemn compact in interests affecting my happiness as an individual or my usefulness in society, or my good name in the world, and then deliberately breaks his word, perjures himself, and leaves me to go down in the catastrophe or to rise from it alone, an injured, though perhaps a wiser man. *Be true*, is the best advice that can be given in a world where treachery is responsible for a large share of all the misery of its inhabitants. Treason is treachery on a large scale, but none the less a sin against man because a gigantic one. If he who proves recreant to his trusts in business, wrongs those who trust him,—certainly he who proves recreant to a nation's trusts, wrongs every man who claims the protection, enjoys the blessings and contributes to the support of its government. Whoever robs my country's treasury, robs me. Whoever disgraces her posts of honor, disgraces all of us who helped put him there. Whoever insults her flag, insults every loyal man that loves it; and whoever stabs at my country's heart, stabs at my dearest interests. What is my merchandise worth without commerce protected by law? What is the value of my broad acres, without courts of justice

to defend my titles? What are stocks worth with national credit ruined? What can I trust, if my country is to be made the sport and spoil of designing public robbers? What state, what city, what township, what village, what neighborhood, can establish, perpetuate, and enjoy the blessings of order and combination for mutual benefit, if the common country—the foster mother of us all—is to be rent and split and shattered at the caprice of fanatical politicians, and the injured pride of fallen parties, or the sectional animosities arising from peculiar institutions? There is not an honest mechanic in the workshops of the North, toiling hard at reduced wages; not a loyal yeoman on the prairies of the West, whose produce finds not its old route to market, by the "father of waters;" not a merchant, suffering from lack of sales; not a manufacturer, whose wares are shut out of their accustomed marts, and whose safe is full of repudiated paper; not a buyer, who pays more than usual for his goods; not a seller, who makes less than his usual profit; not a taxpayer, willingly bearing his share of the burden that war has brought upon us; not a man of us, of any profession, calling, party, or age, but *suffers* from the wrong, that treason has committed against us; not one but is sinned against by these same traitors who plotted this wicked rebellion.

If this be so, is not their overthrow, their utter discomfiture, righteous? Shall we not rejoice in it; shall we not give thanks to God for it? May we not pray that he who sent the angel of destruction to the camp of Sennacherib on that terrible night of doom, will also send panic into the ranks of our enemies and

scatter them before our advancing armies as chaff before the whirlwind? Or, if stout in their resistance, and determined to "rule or ruin," that he will sow the sunny fields of the South, thick as skulls at Golgotha, with their bleaching bones?

Do not be shocked,—I shudder as much as you at the heart-sickening details of a bloody victory. I know, I feel that the dear bought fields of Winchester and Pittsburg were *awfully* glorious. I pray for bloodless victories, if bloodless they can be; but I must pray for the overthrow of Treason, without the woes, the wailings, the widows, the orphans, of hard fought battles, if possible,—but with them all, if the monster will not yield without his hecatomb of human sacrifices. I would forgive our enemies, even as Christ does his, if they will lay down the weapons of their mad rebellion, and cease from their sinning against me and the race of men; but the weapons must come down; if in no other way, then let them fall from hands made nerveless by the missiles of death.

2. *Treason is a sin against the* NATION.

This may be conceded as self-evident; but, how *great* a sin, we can only estimate by viewing the nation, not as a simple tract or belt of land, measured by such and such lines of latitude and longitude and inhabited by civilized beings, but as a *country*, a great country, having a life of its own, and capacities to be developed and applied to the advancement of the race. What is our country? Not the broad expanse of mountain and valley and plain that stretches from ocean to ocean, and from the sunny fields of Mexico to the

frozen zone; this might all remain and in all its variety and fertility of production, and *our country* be no more. Not the inhabitants that now people these hills and valleys and congregate in these cities and do business on these great waters; these might all be where they now are, engaged in the same or similar pursuits, and we have *no country*. What constitutes a nation? Not territory; not men and women; not trade, agriculture and commerce; not education, language, religion; not laws, officers, punishment for crime; not protection to life, property and the pursuit of happiness; not any one, but all of these combined, and that almost indefinable something in addition which we call nationality, the prestige, acknowledgement, deference and place given to this complex thing among the other nations of the world. Canada has territory, and people, and wealth, and law, and all the appliances of government, but no *separate nationality*. So has Scotland and Erin's green isle; but England spreads the pennon of her nationality over them all. Now every man owes allegiance to his own country, as long as he claims its protection and enjoys the blessings it has to bestow. What shall we say then of the black hearted robbers of their country, who not only should peculate from her treasury, steal her very means of self-defence, and take advantage of her mildness to concoct schemes for her destruction, but should actually meanwhile taunt her with weakness, and smite her in the face, and trample on her star-spangled drapery, and then,—to add impudence and mockery, to crime and insult,—should call their mad rebellion "the assumption of original state powers,"

"the privilege of taking care of themselves," the simple "right to be *let alone*"? The allegiance we owe to our country is next in sacredness to that we owe to God; and by our country we do not mean a particular part of that country, not a certain city or town, not a separate state, which neither has nor can claim nationality, but our whole country, the united country,—

> "The union of lakes and the union of lands,
> The union of hearts and the union of hands,
> And the dear old union forever."

This is our country or we have none. To this we owe allegiance beyond that claimed by section, city or state, and he who, native-born, breaks that allegiance, sins against the country that gave him birth, that gave him the proud cognomen of an American, honored throughout the world,—that has spread the wings of her greatness and protection over him, and given him the very power to become what he is, an arrant traitor. The discomfiture of such is righteous, and the morning hasteth in the cycles of time when it shall be said of him, behold "he is not."

3. *Treason is a sin against* God.

If he that wantonly takes the life of his fellow, commits a double sin, one against his fellow, and another against the Being who gave that life, then he that seeks openly or secretly a nation's life, commits a three-fold sin, one against his country, another against his countrymen, and another still against his country's God. The life of a nation is not a human device, but a God-given existence; and God has regard for that life.

This is evident from the manner in which he deals with nations, giving them birth, growth, strength, greatness and a *special work to do.* It is not more true that you and I have our duties, our own allotted work in life, than that every full-grown nation has a specific work in accomplishing the melioration of the race and the redemption of the world. Egypt rocked the cradle of civilization, and gave its peculiar impress of advancement to the chosen people of God. Had some conspirator succeeded in breaking down the house of the Pharaohs, or some foreign power sooner conquered the land of the Nile,—the world might have lost the wisdom of Moses,—and the people of God, the discipline, severe, but healthful, of Egyptian captivity. Greece advanced art and poetry and gave the world that language "in which are enshrined as jewels in a casket of gold, the most wonderful monuments of ancient genius, and the priceless treasures of the Christian Revelation." Had some of its civil feuds succeeded in breaking up its essential unity, then Art must have mourned, Poetry must have languished, and the "fulness of time" for the Messiah to speak in the language of universal literature, would have been postponed, no one can tell how much later.

Rome gave the world the civil law, and carried under her emperors the religion of the Cross wherever her victorious eagles had perched. Had the northmen overrun Italy in the time of Augustus, then Britain had not received the Gospel when it did, and the Cross had not been planted in the then civilized world.

France has been doing a God-ordained work in advancing science and free principles, even amid her rev-

olutions and infidelity. England has been growing to her present giant strength for eight hundred years, and God is making her do efficient service in spreading learning, religion, and the highest type of civilization. So of Spain, Germany, Switzerland, and the young giant of St. Petersburg. These are all nationalities; they have individual life, and God regards that life. They have individual capacities, and God is developing, using each, in the steady progress of the world. And so of the comparatively young and vigorous nation which we delight to call our own. Favored by Heaven with a truly royal birth; nurtured into a vigorous youth, and early arrived at the strength of manhood; with a life peculiarly its own, powers never given to any other nation, enterprise unknown in the old world, achievements in agriculture, mechanic arts, and the development of natural resources without a parallel; emphatically the pioneer in free governments and enlightened, lofty, general progress; with the approval of God on its past successes and the finger of God pointing it still higher; what bolt in the magazines of heaven is swift enough to smite the traitor who would, with cursed dagger of rebellion, stab this beautiful, manly body of our nation, and let out its warm life-blood, cutting short the glorious career God had marked out for it, and insulting God himself by appealing to him for aid in that diabolical work!

God smite the presuming hand that is thus raised against the country, upon which he has so benignly smiled, and against himself, in cutting it off in the midst of its strength, with its work just begun.

The overthrow of traitors *is* righteous; the voices of humanity and of God unite in pronouncing it so. And so, also, it is *certain.* God abhors all infidelity. His dealings with the nations show that he does interfere to turn the devices of wicked and designing men upon their own heads. His word testifies, also, that "His eyes behold the nations," and that "He shall judge among the nations"—He will "make bare His arm in the eyes of all the nations."

God likewise speaks in the moral sense of mankind. How has that been outraged by such wholesale treachery as the annals of the past year must carry down to the coming generations. But justice is not asleep. Retribution is close on the track of treason. The verdict of humanity is rendered; the sentence is gone forth; it is already executing. God uses both the patriotism and the passions of men to meet and thwart such frenzy. Both are thoroughly roused. The recuperative power of national life is beginning to send a healthy circulation through the veins and arteries of the country. A nation is a hard thing to kill—he is a bold, bad man who would attempt it, or be a party to such fratricide.

In a country like ours, united in so many different ways; by such variety of interests;—one in geographical position, and bound together by the great natural bonds of commerce, trade, education, language, religion, and further by the solemn compact of a generous and sacred constitution—in such a country, division is death. It is like severing the vital parts of the human body, the life blood must flow out. The territory, the people, the pursuits of industry, might remain, but the *country*

would be dead! The nationality would be lost! Like that something which we call character in man, life, animal life, may be left; breathing, walking, acting, may continue, but what is that life worth when character is gone. But the sharp knife of Southern treason has not yet succeeded in cutting the cords and severing the arteries of the nation. It has inflicted some wounds, but the hand that held it has received more. These wounds are healing; there is health in the system; there is power to slough off the injured flesh and repair the damage. But meanwhile the traitors' hands shall faint with their much bleeding. Their utter discomfiture is righteous, therefore it is certain.

We rejoice to-day in our successes, and in our rejoicing we have warm tears for hearts that are made sad by the vicissitudes of war; we have tender sympathy for those who have friends exposed to the dangers of the battle-field; we have sincere pity for the mass of our Southern brethren who have been cajoled by designing leaders into the fearful vortex of rebellion; we have natural sympathy, too, for the widows and orphans that wail on Southern soil; we commiserate the condition of loyal, Union loving men who are suffering proscription, persecution, and death there; we have prayers for all the wretched, the suffering, and for the deluded ones who suppose us all barbarians and plunderers, that would pillage them and enrich ourselves: prayers for them all—prayers for friends, prayers for enemies.

It is a noticeable fact, that no battle has been fought on the Sabbath that has not proved disastrous to the

attacking party. Herein is a lesson. God honors them that honor Him: therefore will we trust in Him. We will not be vindictive; we will leave vengeance to Him who knows better how to hurl it than we do. We will carry the sword for traitors in one hand, and peace and protection to loyalty in the other.

Therefore, let us to-day give thanks to God and take courage; He heareth prayer, and of our enemies He saith—

"AND BEHOLD AT EVENING-TIDE TROUBLE; AND BEFORE THE MORNING HE IS NOT.

THIS IS THE PORTION OF THEM THAT SPOIL US, AND THE LOT OF THEM THAT ROB US."